

New Mission News

COMFORTING THE AFFLICTED AND AFFLICTING THE COMFORTABLE SINCE 1980 SEPTEMBER 2002

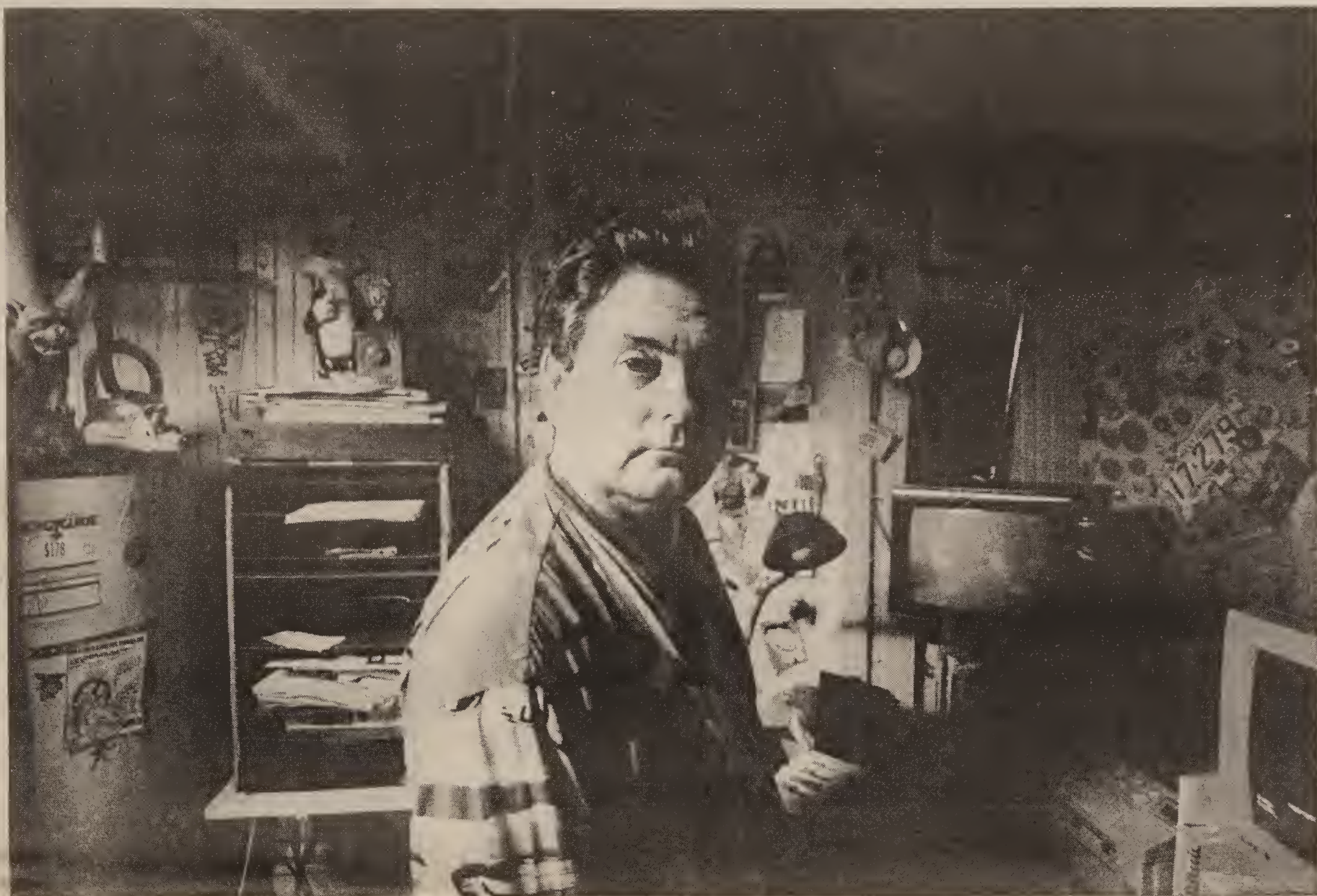


PHOTO: GREG RODEN

Mission mourns Victor Miller

Victor Eugene Miller, editor and founder of the New Mission News, died of a heart attack in his home while watching a baseball game on television during the early evening hours of August 21. He was found by one of his housemates, Betsey Stephens, who attempted CPR and called paramedics, but it was too late. Victor was pronounced dead at 9:30 pm. He was 54.

Word of his sudden, surprising death sent waves of shock and surprise throughout the Mission and through the many circles in which he had played an important role. (In addition to editing, publishing and writing for the New Mission News, Victor was President of the Mission Merchants' Association and served on numerous neighborhood boards and committees.) Within hours, a makeshift shrine of remembrance appeared at the alley door leading to his office, and for the next two weeks his many friends left flowers, burned candles and inscribed their good-byes. See inside. Local politicians, including Carole Migden, Tom Ammiano and Chris Daly, media pundits such as Warren Hinckle, and all the daily and weekly newspapers in the City eulogized him with high praise, and people came together from throughout the neighborhood to plan a memorial celebration of his life.

Born to a working-class family in Millersburg, Pennsylvania on April 5, 1948, Victor Miller attended high school in Santa Monica, California, and went on to major in philosophy at UC Berkeley during the late 'sixties. After graduating in 1970, he underwent training at Stanford Medical Center, then joined Project Piactla of the Hesperian Foundation and

state of Sinaloa. There he helped villagers set up their own clinic, and trained village workers to take it over after he left. Read Victor's own report from the Sierra Madre inside.

NEXT ISSUE SORRY-ed.

He returned to northern California in 1976, where he married Paula Haller and settled in San Francisco. After another short period of paramedic training, Victor turned away from the medical profession and became a neighborhood organizer for the Mission Planning Council. His job was to assist Mission residents in forming block clubs, in order to facilitate communication between neighbors, and to empower them in the ways of grass-roots political activism. When MPC dissolved, he was hired by Operation Upgrade, a neighborhood group centered around 16th and Mission.

The Mission District, it must be remembered, was a very different and far less desirable place to live in the mid-seventies than it is today, when yuppies compete to pay thousands of dollars to buy our homes and throw us out on the street. At that time, BART construction had been tearing up Mission Street for years on end, devastating local businesses by making it nearly impossible for customers to reach them. Massive demolition programs by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency in other parts of the City had flooded the Mission with low-income individuals and families that Redevelopment had displaced from their homes. Our neighborhood's nearly 50 inexpensive hotels and hotel/apartment complexes, originally designed for the single workingmen of San Francisco's vanishing blue collar industries, now were often accommodat-

neighborhood's unemployment rate was close to 20 per cent. Absentee landlords of neighborhood buildings took little interest in maintaining their properties in this economically stagnant area, and management of the buildings often fell into the hands of ruthless individuals who, through petty loan sharking, embezzlement and drug trafficking, exploited tenants, swindled owners, and preyed on the surrounding community. Violent crime was on the increase, and arson and "suspicious" fires were common. Between 1974 and 1976 there were 132 fires within two blocks of where the 16th Street BART station now stands; 15 of these were officially declared to be arson. Twelve people died and ten were listed as missing when the Gartland Apartments at 16th and Valencia burned down under mysterious circumstances near the end of 1975.

It was in this context that Operation Upgrade, also known as the North Mission Association, was formed. When they opened their first office, they hired Victor, half time, as a community organizer and to coordinate volunteer work. With his help, the organization gained local residents a measure of control over the pace and direction of changes in the neighborhood. When the group wanted to publish a newsletter, Victor sold ads to neighborhood businesses to finance the publication, and the North Mission News was born. After a succession of part-time editors, Victor became Editor-in-Chief, and when the North Mission Association disbanded in the early 'nineties, he took the paper over as a sole proprietorship and rechristened it the New Mission News. Since its very beginning, the paper has always been a forum for neighborhood

residents to communicate their concerns to their neighbors. That was its unique mission; it has never had a private or hidden agenda.

In all his years as editor, Victor Miller never once published his own picture in the paper, but we hope he will not mind our doing it in this issue: this month, he is the news.

He will be sorely missed.

Peter Claudius and Chris Collins contributed to this article.

Victor E. Miller

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE NEW MISSION NEWS
April 5, 1948 - August 21, 2002



In Memoriam Victor Miller New Mission News

By Oliver Chin, ochin@sirius.com



He was a throwback who idealized neighborhood. Where identity was a dynamic blend of history, culture, and a sense of place.

Three cheers for the little guy who fought city hall. Who defended a homestead vs. transient politicians. Who stood up to career bureaucrats. Who lent a voice to the undocumented.



Of course, he got his kicks railing against the dot-com mania. He recognized the double-edged sword of gentrification that would change the character of this corner of the world. The tug of war will continue.



The Mission is a melange of food, entertainment, activism, families, work, and spirit. A mix of nationalities, causes, and classes. Where the homeless, illegals, prostitutes, addicts, and gangs eke out a shadowy, shifting existence.

He liked the local angle, the street level. A topical story with a point of view and a message. Skewer the talking heads who spoke out of both sides of their mouths. Spotlight conflicts of special interest. Strew sarcasm on those who took themselves way too seriously.



Victor was cynical yet oddly idealistic. He'd seen his fair share of human failings. But he held out hope that the power of the press could help people be more informed and active citizens. A paper could be both a good read and a civic tool.



Few can bind together a melting pot. We celebrate Victor's life and will miss his caustic wit and shrewd eye. Others will keep alive his memory as they continue to serve his community.

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REMEMBERING VICTOR

Trying to remember Victor Miller seems like an impossible task, because to do so one must start with the painful premise that Victor is no longer with us in person. But once you accept that terribly sad reality, remembering Victor is easy because his character and spirit are embedded in everyone who knew him.

Compassionate. Fair. And always there. I only knew Victor for four years, but it seems much longer than that. Fellow photographer Greg Roden introduced us. While a fan of the paper, I didn't know Victor and was surprised to find I lived across the street from him. I began to contribute photos to the paper, covering the occasional neighborhood rally and the like. As was the case with so many others, I was grateful for the chance to get some work published and to become more involved in the neighborhood. It was good practice and community service at the same time.

I remember the day Victor rolled up on his bicycle while I was sitting outside of Martha & Brothers one Saturday afternoon in fall of 1999. "I've got an idea for a new series," he announced. "We [NMN] are going to do a first-person eviction series. They will run as first-person accounts. You can do the portraits."

It was the right idea for the time, and the



Victor Miller with Operation Upgrade president Elizabeth Anello and early editor Dan Dereszynsky.

project shaped both our relationship and the way in which I will always think of Victor. Titled "To the Egress," the series aimed to inform the community of the rampant displacement occurring by giving its citizens their own voice. Victor felt strongly that every person should have the same rights as others, regardless of income, or education, or status. The elderly, the working class, single mothers, and recent immigrants -- these were all people that Victor really cared about. The fact that he ran the series for almost two years reinforced for me the notion that Victor was in it for the long haul: truth and persistence were his allies.

Working with Victor was inspiring, both because of the wisdom he imparted and also because of the energy he invested in the paper. You definitely didn't want to let him down. Yet despite his bear-like exterior, Victor had a notoriously soft touch. I remember when we interviewed Anna Jones, a nice old lady who was one of the first Egress eviction stories, Victor noticed an inscription about friendship on a bowl in her living room and ended the story with it. And while he was cynical enough to spot a politician's ulterior motive a mile away, he was also optimistic enough to think that the forces of truth and justice might eventually prevail.

When I saw him last in July, on the street, he seemed upbeat. He was convinced that if Bush didn't successfully manipulate a war with Iraq, he was going to lose in 2004. "He's going to be a one-timer, just like his dad," Victor predicted. He also said that he had been going through some of the old issues of the NMN and revisiting some of the eviction series. "We did some good work on the Egress," he said, before adding, "You should get the full series [of photos] up in the neighborhood somewhere." I felt proud that Victor thought well of the work.

It's hard to believe that I won't be shouting Victor's name from across the street anymore, or ringing the buzzing door to his office (and wondering how long it would take for it to swing open under his push). Some people are like an institution. They are so important to their environment that you just can't quite imagine them not being around. I know that Victor felt that way about others; I hope he somehow knows that we are all feeling that way about him now.

Friend, neighbor and mentor to many, he was the voice of a community and the political conscience of the city. We will mourn him and miss him, and celebrate him by trying to carry on. Best wishes, Victor, for safe passage to whatever life awaits after this one. We will expect a full report.

- Gary Stenger

* * *

An Open Letter to the Members of the Mission District Community:

Dear Community Members,

I am sending this note out to members of the Mission community to thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the support and love you've shown since Victor's heartbreaking death. The phone calls, cards, letters and e-mails have really touched my heart, as have the gifts of food, flowers and help with his memorial.

Victor may be gone from us, but his generous spirit is still alive and well in the Mission.

Blessings to you all.

Warmly,
Cathy Sullivan

* * *

Victor Miller was my loving partner from 1986 - 1991. Victor was a very loyal and caring friend, and a scrupulously ethical person who treated everyone with respect. He's been an inspiration to me, and remains so. His dedication to the struggle for social justice as a way of life introduced me to a whole new world. Victor made the most of his abilities and situations. He has helped many, many people through his activism, his paper, and his personal relationships. He had a global perspective, yet knew the Mission inside out. He's always been an intellectual, but he wanted to be respected for the relevance of what he did. He is a truly successful person.

Victor chose and persevered in a most difficult endeavor - to eke out a living as a community organizer without burdening those folks whose causes he championed. He took the North Mission News from a raggedy looking non-profit with minimal readership to the widely-read, often-quoted and professional looking monthly neighborhood newspaper, the New Mission News. Not that his personal income changed, but the influence of the paper certainly did. He did everything himself: selling ads for revenue, investigative reporting, layout, publishing and distribution. The paper was always out on time.

Victor has always supported local, self-organized projects from the people of the district - from elderly tenants to anarchists. This is his legacy: advocating and encouraging community-based organizing and direct action.

The five happy years that he was my partner were incredibly influential for me. I had missed him terribly in the interim and was pleased that he and I could re-establish reconciliation and friendship three years ago.

For Victor- I have fond memories, everlasting affection and esteem. My heartfelt condolences to Kathy and Helen.

- Jory

TENOCHTITLAN - It was a terminally clotted morning here in the Centro Historico and the urban turmoil had me on edge. When Elizabeth called from San Francisco I knew that something was awfully wrong. Victor Miller's ticker had stopped in the middle of the long night, she told me. There goes the neighborhood, I muttered to myself. But, of course, it isn't true. The Mission has survived a lot of trauma down the decades I have known it and it will survive the loss of Victor Miller, crusading editor, publisher, paste-up man, reporter and eternal luchador social.

Victor Miller, Presente! as they say here.

I organized in the Mission long before Victor checked into the neighborhood. Back in the '60s, the Mission Tenants Union stood in the doorway when the sheriffs came to evict families and old people, threw dead rats at live slumlords, and distributed large numbers of cockroaches at the Board of Health when the city wouldn't send us inspectors. We organized important rent strikes, fought for rent control now, terrorized the poverty board, and were beaten and jailed about once a week by the Mission Station pigs. I lost my left eye to them.

I always figured Victor was the successor in this gritty work. Early on, maybe May of '65, knocking up doors on Shotwell, we found tenants who told us about others who had knocked up their doors and tried to organize these mean streets ten years before, and I realized that we were part of a larger history. Victor is part of that continuum of struggle. Others will come next.

I offer a poem published in the New Mission News in late 2000, at the height of the Yuppie land rush. I wrote it on the street, rushed over to Elizabeth's, and e-mailed it off to Victor. I send it to him again now.

RONCO Y DULCE

Coming out of the underground on the BART escalator, the Mission sky is washed by Autumn, the men and their garbage bags are clustered in the battered plaza we once named for Sandino Behind me, down below, in the throat of the earth, a rough bracero sings of his comings and his goings in a voice as ronco y dulce as the mountains of Michoacan y Jalisco for the white zombies caffeining downtown to the dot coms. They are trying to kick us out of here again, they are trying to drain this neighborhood of color, of color.

This time we are not moving on. We are going to stick to this barrio like the posters so fiercely pasted to the walls of the Mission, with iron glue that they will have to take them down brick by brick to make us go away. Even then our ghosts will come home and turn those bricks into weapons and take back these streets brick by brick and song by song ronco y dulce as Jalisco y Michoacan, San Pedro Sula y Morazon, Managua, Manila, Ramallah, Pine Ridge Vietnam and Africa. As QR says we here now, motherfuckers Tell the Klan and the Nazis and the real estate vampires to catch the next train out for Hell

- John Ross

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Thanks Victor... for everything!

Victor published my first photograph ever in print, in the Mission News some-time in early 1994. Over the next six years, I was lucky enough to maintain a working relationship and friendship with Victor that made a great impact on my life and, hopefully, on the lives of a few others.

Victor was unusual, to say the least. Nothing about him or nothing he did was 'usual.' But that's what I liked about him. From the rise and fall of the dot.com age, to the Gentrification of the Mission, to the homeless, the hungry, the unfortunate... the afflicted, Victor was there.

"Hey Greg... it's Victor. I need a cover shot for the next issue. You got anything that might work?" Victor would say two days before deadline. But it never mattered what the assignment was or how soon the deadline was quickly approaching, I always felt that my time and efforts and photos were my contribution to the neighborhood that I loved and lived in - The Mission. It was my chance to give back to my community.

The best stories I worked on for the paper, however, were the ones where Victor and I would go on assignment together. We did a piece one time called 'Living Outside in San Francisco' that, in my mind, was the most significant piece I worked on for the Mission News. Victor and I visited several homeless encampments, including truck/van/bus parking lots for the vehicularly challenged, a phrase that I think Victor coined. Several ex-Mission residents were incredibly welcoming to us, wanting to tell their stories and show us their ultra-basic existence... and the photos and writing reflected that.

Now you're gone, but all your hard work and dedication will live on. You will be remembered and you will be missed.

Thank you again, and farewell to you, Victor Miller.

- Greg Roden, Photographer for the New Mission News: 1994-2000

Irascible, independent, rambunctious and irreplaceable were the first words that I conjured up in my mind when I learned of the loss of our brother Victor. His coverage of our beloved Mission District; the struggle against displacement and the fight over gentrification; the forced mass exodus of a Latino, immigrant and working-class population were never muted in the voice of the pages Victor printed.

I remember the last time I met with him. He pulled me aside and said, "Have you met the guys running against Chris Daly for District 6 Supervisor?" I paused, and before I could answer, he answered his own question with that usual acerbic wit: "If they were running for asshole they'd win by a landslide." Vintage Victor. Never gave up the fight! Could always manage to see the forest from the trees even if he was riding through the Mission on a bicycle. Victor Miller siempre presente!

- Richard Marquez, Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition

Victor's sudden passing is a great loss for the Mission and for San Francisco. He had incredible insight and a courageous spirit. It is amazing to find how many of us were connected to Victor. He will be missed.


- Bevan Dufty

When I approached Victor about doing some articles on urban ecology in the 90s, he said "Sure," and assigned me to write about raccoons. It wasn't exactly what I had in mind, but we wound up doing a series of urban wildlife pieces.

Victor always gave new journalists, poets and activists a chance to write for his newspaper. He fought for the community, without losing his commitment to fairness and accuracy. I will miss him forever, but I know his spirit remains alive and active in this community. We should all strive to make him proud of us.

Yours for the Mission,

David Spero, RN



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I am saddened to hear of Victor's death. In 1992, when I was broke and new in town, I volunteered to take some pictures for the New Mission News, after some Mission police officers offered me a ride-along. He paid for film, bought me a beer and, on a rainy St. Patrick's day, some corned beef, and taught me a little bit about the internecine warfare that is called neighborhood politics here in San Francisco. More recently, I was evicted from my house (owner move-in, doncha know), and Victor ran the piece I wrote in "To The Egress."

I have a lot of respect for Victor. He exemplified the interested, alert, intelligent citizen, I think, and his publishing the paper was a natural outgrowth of that interest. He knew what he did and he did it well, and that is a good goal for us all. I will miss his presence behind the New Mission News and know that whether he is in heaven or hell, he's figuring out how to sell the ads for local business that will let him get on with the real work of informing the citizenry.

Peace be to you, Victor.

- Jason Albertson

Victor, Yours was the first house I interviewed at when I moved to the city. I thought you were mean and I didn't take the room. I was really wrong, and I learned that in the following years, time and again. You will be greatly, greatly missed. Fare well.

Love, Sarah

Dear Victor, I will really miss you!

Toby

Love Always ? Puff

Victor, You sound like one hell of a guy- Being able to do what you loved. WOW! You did that! We should all be so lucky.

Victor

A great defender of the Mission.

Victor: Big heart, sharp wit, clear sight & tireless worker. It's all in the name.

Victor

You cared about everybody! Every-body is so sad without you!

-Linda

Victor- I can't believe you are not going to be riding down Valencia (on the sidewalk) anymore. What a huge loss to our community. So sorry for your large circle of family, friends & neighbors. I am already missing you.

-Mary B.

Goodbye Victor, Take Care. Ahoy.

-R.I.P.

Victor- I saw you on Wednesday, making your rounds, and Thursday I wake to find this memorial.... Thank you for all your work towards the Mission's sanctity. You are missed....

Your neighbor,

Mike

BYE VICTOR

For all thru the battles you raged

An eminent torch surrounded

By arrogance, ignorancce and greed

Who here can now hold that flame

Tight to the temples of oppression?

No...no one

It will require community!

Rest now... wish us luck

Good bye, my friend.

Victor- you will be missed. I worry how we will survive without your comfort & insight.

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The Gift of Giving Others A Voice

One of Victor Miller's greatest accomplishments for the community was to provide a voice for those who would not have otherwise been heard. Such was the case for San Francisco Mission youth through the column "GangSpeak," which Victor Miller agreed to publish in New Mission News (see reprinted "GangSpeak" column by Eddie, below). In this column, youths could publish their own essays and art work.

The GangSpeak column was not only read throughout the Mission District, particularly by its youth and their families, but found its way to other neighborhoods also confronted by the problems of gang violence. It was also read by many riders using the UCSF shuttle system and those using the CalTrans buses. The Gangspeak column found its way as far as San Quentin Prison, and even past the impenetrable censors at Pelican Bay where, for some inmates, the column was a small ray of hope.

For the youths, the work they did associated with the GangSpeak column, putting down their guns and lifting their pens, was a critical factor in their ability to eventually leave the gang-life. These youths have now all gone on to get jobs and raise families and/or are currently in college or recently graduated. This fall semester, one individual entered graduate school to get a Masters in Education, while another has just been hired as a social worker by the City and County of San Francisco.

What is most striking about this group of previous gang-bangers is that they have, in one way or another, dedicated

HOMEY HOMELESS

By Rachel Desjardins

Hard times have hit Mission youth-run organization HOMEY, Homies Organizing the Mission to Empower Youth, a non-profit community activist group helping young people take charge of their surroundings to become leaders in their community. HOMEY was rendered homeless on Saturday June 1 due to a fire that destroyed their youth center located on Mission St. between 16th and 17th.

The fire gutted two offices within the building, doing roughly \$100,000 worth of damage according to Julia Sabori, executive director of HOMEY. Rifling through soot and debris, two investigators along with members of HOMEY's staff rebuilt scorched rooms in search for the cause of the fire. "The fire is still under investigation," Sabori said.

The center was home to several youth grass roots organizations operating under the umbrella of HOMEY. Now homeless, the organizations were forced to disperse throughout San Francisco,

themselves to working in the community helping other youths. Tragically, Victor's voice has been silenced but his vision of allowing others to be heard will live on as, in the case of the SF Mission Youth, the torch is passed from one generation to another.

Deanne Berger-Moudgil, MA, Youth Gang Activist; Former New Mission News GangSpeak column editor (1993-1998); Consultant, University of California, San Francisco

Always Looking Over My Shoulder

Hello, my name is Eddie, but folks know me by my Street Name of Ed Diablo. And, the reason I'm writing to your newspaper is because I'm interested in sharing some words and drawings with those that may read your paper. I first came across your paper some four months ago! And only till now I've had the courage to make my move.

One day as I was coming from work at 5 PM, I had just gone to the Warehouse and bought a CD, I caught the bus line and sat all the way in the back (the reason for it being who I am, I'm always looking over my shoulder) and, as I sat down, there on the floor was a copy of the New Mission News! As I began to read it, I saw your column and it made me smile and feel good inside because now I could be heard and seen. Thank you for the opportunity to do so.

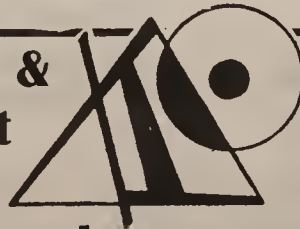
By Eddie - Reprinted from "GangSpeak" column: June, 1996.

relying on other non-profit organizations to take them under their roof.

Now operating out of a temporary location on 19th and Alabama St., HOMEY will need to find a new home once again by the end August. "Not many landlords are youth-friendly," Sabori said. "It's hard to find a place in the Mission because landlords have high expectations ever since the dot-com boom." Set to move into the Hamm's Building, located on Bryant St. between 15th and Division, they were met with yet another stumbling block. "We were supposed to move into the Hamm's Building along with Vision Youthz Organization, but the building manager said 'no' the day before we were supposed to move in," Sabori said.

Discouraged by this news, the HOMEY organization is in search of 200,000 square feet to continue their mission to serve the youth. "We feel powerless," Sabori said. "The youth are still waiting and they're not getting any healthier. We need to find a space and lay down some roots." The search continues...

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LADYBUG



I'm Ladybug, a nine-year-old long-haired blue. I'm one of the sweetest long-term residents at the San

Francisco SPCA, but I've been waiting much too long for a home. I'm very shy at first; however, cheek rubs are a sure way to win my heart. While we're at it, here are some other ways to coax cats like me out of our shells. Talk softly and move slowly around us. Avoid staring at us; sometimes we take it as a threat. It helps to get down on our level, instead of towering over us. Don't try to pull us from a hiding place. When we're ready, we'll come to you. 'Til then, pet us gently in our hiding place. If you want to entice us, try a tasty morsel of food or some interactive play. Get a cat dancer or a fishing pole-type toy-just make sure it's not too big and scary. If

you're patient and understanding, we'll give you plenty of love and purrs in return. So if you're looking for a very special feline friend . . . if you can give me the calm reassurance I need . . . if you can provide a stable environment with gentle people to share my life . . . I could be the cat for you. If you are interested in adopting me, come visit me at the San Francisco SPCA, 2500 16th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, 415-554-3000, www.sfspca.org.



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JUMPING OFF WALLS

By Tanya Marie Vlach

As I walk up to Harrison and Alameda to watch a rehearsal of Jo Kreiter's Mission Wall Dances cars slow down next to me and drivers strain their heads upwards. It is one of those bone chilling days in the Mission: the bicyclists detour, stop amid the icy breeze, and gaze at the amazing feats above. Finally I look up and, past all the bright colors in the mural of a building on fire with flames coming out of windows, up on the real fire escape that juts out, are two live dancers, harnessed and twirling around each other in a what looks like a lover's duet. They are three stories up, and from where I am I can't see one inkling of fear pass across their faces when they move. That is one of the most amazing things about Jo's aerial performances: how relaxed all the dancers seem to be. Down on the left hand corner of the large canvas, there is a woman practicing backward spirals in the air. On the ground, Jo Kreiter directs them and, even though she is a small woman, her voice is large and her presence is just as big as the mural which covers the whole side of the building. Across the street, sitting on the sidewalk, is the composer, Pamela Z. She asks Jo questions and gives feedback now and again. I keep thinking how those dancers must be freezing their butts off because it just dropped 20 degrees in five minutes. All I have to say is, site-specific dance in the summer in San Francisco takes serious commitment.

Mission Wall Dances is a site-specific aerial dance piece performed by Jo Kreiter's Flyaway Productions on a three story wall. The collaborators include Jo's husband, Josef Norris, who painted the mural, Pamela Z, the composer and long-time collaborator, and Lalo Cervantes, the set designer. The piece

"pays homage to the displacement of countless Mission residents, and to the resilience of the diverse communities that have struggled to remain."

The mural itself seems to be a visual documentation of the dislocation of the people of the Mission, through a specific incident: being uprooted by a violent fire - almost thirty years ago, the Gartland Apartments went up in flames and many residents lost their homes. The live dancers "appear and disappear as both painters and characters of the mural. The choreography uses both realism and fantasy to conjure images of Mission life-the women who sell flowers on the street, the women who shop in the vegetable markets, the lesbian salsa dancers at El Rio." The piece invokes these ghosts of the Mission and its iconography. Jo considers this also a commentary on "the constant forces of destruction and the constant rebirth in contrast -- there is a consistent conjuring ideal in the Mission and in the ebbs and flows of how much acclaim we get publicly for doing what we do."

The cool thing is that "once the performances end, Norris will complete the mural, leaving a tangible and lasting reminder of how the streets were enlivened by dance and music, and as a permanent documentation of the recent dislocation of so many Mission residents."

Jo moved to San Francisco when Contraband was performing a show in the pit of the burnt out Gartland Hotel in the early eighties, and she has performed ever

since. After much displacement, Mission Wall Dances specifically acknowledges the "30 years of arson in the Mission that has been used as means for eviction. The Gartland Apartments, set on fire in 1975, is painted in the center of the mural." This perfect collaboration of wife and husband team are creating a wonderful living memorial to the loss of home and the attack on culture that the Mission has suffered through. It is fitting for her to complete this full cycle by creating a piece about a place that was lost when she arrived.

Jo esteems herself as a community-based artist, but as opposed to her previous, more esoteric pieces, Mission Wall Dances particularly strikes a chord close to home, based as it is on real loss and real hope. But, like all stories, there is a reversal, and if you read the mural from right to left you can see the obvious renewal. People come together in a crowd in some kind of joyous occasion in a very green park. Perfect timing: after the expansive evictions in the late nineties, the pain and anger has settled down and now there is room for new beginnings. Jo hopes that "in the most ideal sense [this performance] will invigorate or reinvigorate people to invest themselves in their community and their neighborhood and to take control. If they direct themselves, the better the community will be. If the piece taps into this, change is possible."

That there are still risk-taking artists like this who don't forget their home and will even jump off walls is a wonderful sign of renewal. And by the way, the performance is free. How great is that?

Mission Wall Dances
Intersection for the Arts
Flyaway Productions
Sat/Sun - September 14, 15, 21 and 22
Performances at 2 pm & 4 pm
1849 Harrison Street (at Alameda)
William B. Scott Facility
General Info: 415.626.3311
Press Contact: Mona Baroudi
415.602.1185
monabaroudi@sbcbglobal.net

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NEIGHBORHOOD BEAT



by Paul Romo

Mixed Messages

Steve Huegli has a gift: his ability to bring complete strangers from the community together, more out of civic concern than because of his skill as a host. And if things go as he hopes, the 17 Reasons sign will be restored in its rightful place following the August 28th proceedings. (Ed. note: The meeting never materialized.)

The sign, which was replaced by a beer ad several months ago, is still housed in a nearby warehouse. It was rescued by another supporter, Stephen Parr. However, the community is showing evidence of support.

"A lot of people want to help out. They're hitting the streets, selling T-shirts. There is a barber that stands out front of Bi-Rite and has people sign petitions. There will be a public radio story in October on KALW 91.7 FM, which is affiliated with the San Francisco Unified School District."

Spanganga, a performance space/art gallery, will be highlighting artwork related to the '17 Reasons' sign for one month. And a benefit at ATA (Artists Television Access) will be hosted by the Other Cinema in the coming weeks.

Architect Arnie Lerner, who is no stranger to SF Planning Commission hearings, will attend to add his support. He was instrumental in saving a well-known theater in Santa Cruz.

Huegli has heard no word from the other parties[Foster Media or the owner of the building], who have blocked his efforts to replace the sign. "They're not in contact with me. They've hired some high-profile lawyers to take on their case," he said.

"If they are found in violation of their permit, we will appeal to a higher court. I knew that people were interested; they've

fought the Gap and Starbuck's. They've let [those companies] know to stay out of the neighborhood. The community is not going to disappear," he continued.

Understanding the variables and inevitable twists in a case like this, Huegli knows he can't be promised anything. If the sign is back up in a year, he will be very happy with that.

"I can imagine Ammiano and Brown having a splash for a day, but then the day after that the sign will become this mysterious thing again. I don't think it will be the next Golden Gate Bridge."

<http://www.17reasonswhy.org>
Spanganga 3376 19th Street
415-821-1102

ATA Gallery 992 Valencia Street
415-824-3890
<http://www.othercinema.com/main-frame.html>

Meet the Parents

For various reasons, some members at Creativity Explored do not speak. It simply is not possible. However, this has not stopped them from sharing their powerful messages. They communicate only visually.

Knowing this, art instructor Gloria Morales wanted to explore student's thoughts on Family.

"The majority of member artists I work with live either in group homes or board and care homes and have very limited

contact with their 'natural' family," she said.

Executive Director Amy Taub continues, "Many member artists have developed a circle of support: people who accept, love, understand and emotionally support them. That does not include family members who are 'blood-related'."

This is not Outsider art. That title is reserved for people who have chosen to or are residing on the fringes or outside of society. The artists that create and display at Creativity Explored are part of the community. They may even work in your local grocery store.

Whether it is perceived as Folk Art, Visionary Art, Intuitive art or Very Special art, this form of self-expression can not be denied. Regardless of the title, there is an undeniable honesty that beams back at the viewer, leaving an indelible imprint on the soul.

At first thought, parents and siblings are generally what comes to mind when thinking of family.

For a number of artists, pets play a prominent role in their work. There are birds, cats and fish. A tremendous amount of these 'stories' have subtleties and depth that invoke laughter or a smile: grinning cats dancing on a deserted beach, their arms outstretched, paw prints shooting across the sand; the dozens of rare and exotic birds curiously stacked diagonally atop each other-the square cards holding them, no bigger than a coaster; rows of seemingly startled abstract fish., their forms bathed in various pastel colors.

Though some of these works may seem raw by general artistic standards, they are far from uncooked.

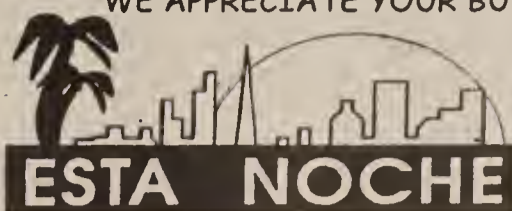
In some cases the layers of obsessive detailing is astounding. In others it is simply unpredictable, poetic, intense and powerfully moving. Many of these images are extremely individual, inventive and, above all, lasting.

In the next year, the non-profit gallery and art studio will be doing several thematic shows. "Some of our upcoming shows will showcase media exploitation," Taub explains.

Leaving no room for misunderstanding, the upcoming show in October will be provocatively titled, "Don't Call Me Retard." This exhibit will focus on the realities of living with a disability on a daily basis.

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www.creativityexplored.org

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This Is My Family September 1-October 12, 2002

Don't Call Me Retard Opening reception Thursday, Oct. 17, 7-9pm

Exhibit runs October 17-November 23

Money Back at Tax Time

Say the word taxes and watch the set of eyes across from you gloss over.

But mention the word, return, and watch those same eyes twinkle.

If you've paid property taxes on your home or at least \$50 in rent during 2001, you may have some money coming your way during tax time.

From answering your questions to helping complete Homeowner and Renter Assistance (HRA) forms, there are trained volunteers in the area to provide you with general assistance. And according to the Franchise Tax Board, the service is absolutely free.

The volunteer assistance program will provide free claims help between now and October 15th.

Eligible recipients must have had a household income of \$37,119 or less, or gross income of \$67,490 or less and have been at least 62 years of age or blind or disabled, regardless of age, on December 31, 2001.

For the 2002 claim year, qualified homeowners can receive a payment of up to \$472.60, while renters can get up to \$347.50. For those new to the program, forms and instructions can be obtained by calling FTB or by logging on to their website.

Qualifiers are encouraged to file by October 15. They may file 2002 claims as late as June 30, 2003, but it will take longer to get a check after October 15. After October, the Franchise Tax Board is buried with income tax filing paperwork. To locate the nearest volunteer site contact:

California Franchise Tax Board
(800) 338-0505 www.ftb.ca.gov

Shooting From the Hip

Fifteen years spent working in media non-profits, teaching and making films have given Lise Swenson the advantage she needed to work with at-risk youngsters.

TILT (Teaching Intermedia Literacy Tools), a non-profit organization, works within school programs and community organizations to teach the fundamentals of moviemaking. This enables students to

tell their own stories, using the media to send their own messages.

Swenson and her team work with at risk youth, meaning "kids who have been in juvenile hall, repeat offenders, kids on the street and kids on drugs."

Students then get an understanding of decoding stereotypical images and learn to construct positive messages that are representative of issues they face daily.

"They don't want to be portrayed as gangsters and whores," the Program Director (pronounced Leeza) said.

TILT graduates who are now in their early to late 20's help mentor the program.

"Once students get into movie making mode, get a taste of it, they continue on with other projects and TILT becomes another path down their road," she said.

When asked how the program has changed those involved she recounted the story of a documentary made by and about substance abusers that is currently viewed in rehab centers. "One former addict credits the tape for helping him kick his addiction...this is really powerful stuff."

Confronting body image, relationships, homophobia and cultural acceptance, As if it Matters, was written, produced, edited and filmed by nine young people under the guidance of TILT. In the film, six high school students take the viewer through a 24-hour period.

As co-founder of ATA, Artist Television Access, a non-profit media arts access and education facility, she brings a deeply collaborative work model to TILT. In the process, Swenson has been working diligently to raise the nearly \$32,000 needed, by 2003, to continue running the program. And while TILT has received support from various family funds, the Arts Commission and NEA Grants, they have only started doing outreach which has all been word-of-mouth.

Additionally, through her affiliation with THE LAB (an artists' organization that supports performing, media and literary arts) Swenson secured a three year collaboration with acclaimed composer Beth Custer, as well as the Joe Goode Performance Group, on a large scale sound composition and original works program that will certainly broaden students' interests, as well as their knowledge of the performing arts.

Swenson says that educators in the program go through rigorous training that pays off for students. They in turn receive a solid education as well as turn out good product.

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MISSION DISTRICT (CALENDAR)

7 SATURDAY

Family Storytime in Spanish at the Mission Branch Library every Saturday at 12 Noon. For the entire family 300 Bartlett St @ 24th 695-5090

Galleria de la Raza Opening reception for Resurrection of Tigilau 24th St

8 SUNDAY

Drum/Percussion Festival - the African Percussion Society will host its Congo Solo festival at Rhythm & Motion Dance Studio 1133 Mission St 2-4pm \$10 adults \$5 kids 621-0643

9 MONDAY

Monday Night Marsh - Stand-up comedy and performance art by both the brightest lights and dimmest bulbs in the field. The Marsh, 1062 Valencia, 8 pm, \$7. 826-5750 (every Monday)

12 THURSDAY

Essence of the Mission captured in multiple perspectives at the LAB by a team of Mission artists under Lise Swenson Opening Reception 7- 9pm at Redstone Bldg, 2948 16th St 864-8855

13 FRIDAY

Qorey Golob's daring use of color and unique interpretation of reality transform the familiar into the extraordinary in both her paintings and sculptures. Gallery opening 6- 8:30 pm 331 Potrero Ave

Voices on Paper - 25 year retrospective of Posters and Prints 7 pm reception at the Mission Cultural Center

Music from the Mission - curated by Beth Custer and Jeff Ray at the LAB (see the 12th)

14 SATURDAY

The Bored Collective presents: ASS BOMB, Larry Heard aka Mr Fingers [Alleviated Music], Blaktroniks [Reflective], Jonah Sharp, Kevin Koga [Devotion/Taboo], Chris Orr [Arrow Bar], Shobhan Club 6 -- 60 Sixth St -- 415 863 1221 -- \$15 before midnight

Mission Wall Dances -Intersection for the Arts presents Jo Kreiter and her acclaimed aerial dance company, Flyaway Productions, in Mission Wall Dances -- an interdisciplinary site-specific piece performed on a three-story wall. Over the course of two weekends, the performance pays homage to the displacement of countless Mission residents Outdoors at 1849 Harrison Street (@ Alameda) Info: 626.2787 Saturday-Sunday, September 14-22, 2pm & 4pm Fre

Grupo Mono Blanco, master percussionists; Theatrical music and dance concert of the traditional son jarocho (Veracruz) and son cubano (of Cuba) 1428 Alice St in Oakland (2 1/2 blocks from the 12th St BART station) (510) 233-8015.

SUNDAY 15

Mission Market to Benefit CELLspace each Sunday through November 2050 Bryant St

TUESDAY 17

Intersection Literary Series - readings by Jaime Jacinto and Barbara Jane Reyes at Intersection for the Arts 446 Valencia St 8pm \$5-15 sliding scale

Mission Community Planning Workshop #4 - The Planning Department will present three alternatives for new Zoning Controls in the Mission. Community members in attendance will have the opportunity to review and comment on these alternatives. More info: Johnny Jaramillo at 558-6818 At the Mission Dolores Auditorium, 3371 16th St. Between Dolores and Church 6 - 8:30 pm free

Free lecture: "Human Rights & an International Code of Conduct" by former Costa Rican president and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Oscar Arias at Univ of SF McLaren Center Rm 250 2130 Fulton St. 422-2697

18 WEDNESDAY

Cine Latino 10th annual film festival at Brava Theatre Center begins 18th through the 29th

Chac, the Rain Spirit - a Mayan Folk Tale. Opera Piccola "Small Works" Theatre Company presents a fun story from Mexico. Come early to volunteer to be part of the show! Mission Library 300 Bartlett 4 pm

Spoken word from the Mission curated by Claire Light at the LAB 864-8855 Be a Star - Open Call!

19 THURSDAY

Cine Club at Mission Cultural Center "En el Pais No Pasa Nada"

20 FRIDAY

Opening reception: Fine Arts du Jour gallery 672 So Van Ness 6-midnight Fri, Sat & Sun

Performance from the Mission curated by Emael at the LAB 864-8855 Be a Star - Open Call!

21 SATURDAY

The Bored Collective presents A RAVE CALLED ANDIE a benefit party for Andie P Cotton DJ Spun, Jenó, Simon, Polywog, Shobhan, Corey Black, Chill Out Room, Jonah Sharp, Nick Philip, O.S.T. -- Club 6 -- 60 Sixth St -- 415 863 1221 -- 10pm - 4am -- \$10

24 TUESDAY

Storytelling and Strategizing about Cultural Policy in America At Mission Cultural Center

25 WEDNESDAY

Dance from the Mission at the LAB, curated by Kristen Chappa and Mary Armcntrout. 864-8855 Be a Star - Open Call! Sunday 29th reading and book signing

26 THURSDAY

Decadence, politics and mythology - Catullus Live is a one man show, which brings to life the words of the iconoclastic Roman Poet Gaius Catullus At the Marsh 1062 Valencia St Sept 19-28, Wed & Thursday 8pm, Sat 7 & 9:30 pm 826-5750

29 SUNDAY

Elektric Soul - First Annual Electronic Music & Arts Festival on Treasure Island Presented by Bulletproof Productions/ Leftfoot UK / Reflective Records -- 12 noon - midnight -- \$35 including shuttle to and from Pier 32, kids free, 2 outdoor stages -- main & ambient, indoor sound system Daddy G [Massive Attack], Mixmaster Morris [Ninja Tune], Fila Brazilia [DJ set] 100% Dynamite [Soul Jazz sound system], Defferent Drummer [ex Rockers Hi-Fi] Jonah Sharp & Radioactive [Reflective/Spearhead], Blaktroniks [Reflective] John Beltran [Ubiquity Recs], Miguel Migs & Lisa Shaw [Naked, many more-- Local Artists and Independant Filmmakers in the Fog Watch Bldg -- Kid Stuff - Precita Eyes

Mural Project will have a mural in progress more info & online ticket sales [no fee] elektricsoul.com

2 WEDNESDAY -OCTOBER

12:10 -1 pm "San Francisco during the Gold Rush" First in a series of Gold Rush lectures every Wednesday in October by Charles A. Fracchia. See a wall mounted panorama looking across the Mission in the 1800's Auditorium, State of California Bldg, 350 McAllister

3 THURSDAY -OCTOBER

Meet the Composer - The amazing Beth Custer Ensemble will be hosted by the LAB in a range of activities engaging many facets of the community. The evening will include presentations by Lise Swensen, TILT Joe Goode Performance Group, to be followed by a reception. At the LAB, in the Redstone Building 2948 16th St. 8 pm \$7-10 sliding scale

Victor -- In His Own Words

My name is Victor Miller. I am the publisher and principal writer of the New Mission News, a monthly newspaper focused on happenings in the Mission District, its role as a microcosm of the broader conflict between the rich and the poor and its special character as a place where a variety of cultures have managed to live together in a rambunctious harmony.

In the megauniverse of the global info-tainment complex I am a mere grunt, chronicling the small time criminality of slumlords, the myriad corruptions of local government and the casual violence of our streets. I also sell the advertising, which is, like all sales, a humbling experience that keeps one's ego in check and in a continually bruised state.

While I would like to say that an unwavering adherence to the truth steers the editorial helm, when reviewing the restaurants of major advertisers I have, on occasion, permitted a certain amount of shameless exaggeration; balancing integrity and survival is always an excruciating experience.

Besides being a media grunt, I have come to think of myself as something of an urban peasant. Over the last two decades and change, I have carved out a professional symbiotic relationship and personal emotional bond to this community that, at this stage in the game, cannot be altered without major spiritual trauma. Fortunately, this is a continually fascinating place to be. If I'm a lifer in the 'hood, that's fine, it's a pretty good life.

Running a newspaper that is expected to some extent to be the voice of this community means mastering the ability to work in a creative way with diverse and sometimes infuriating personalities. (I have always been dependant on the kindness of strange people.) Although the New Mission News is a sole proprietorship, the fact that none of the contributors are paid means making an ongoing effort to maintain everyone's cooperation. It also means a certain amount of living up to the "voice of the community" expectation-the closer you come to meeting that standard the more time and effort people are willing to put into the next issue. I have been able to keep this very demanding arrangement viable for twenty years which I would hope says something about my ability to work in a cooperative situation.



ages 6-11 at 2 pm & ages 12-17 at 4 pm.
282-8411



ONGOING THEATER, ARTS AND DANCE

Let's Talk About Me - Three world premiere one-act comedies: Behind the Candelabra-My life with Liberace (starring Philip R. Ford), Simply Stunning-The Doris Fish Story (starring Arturo Galster), and White Trash Debutante (starring Jennifer Blowdryer as herself.) Theater Rhinoceros, 2926 16th Street, through September 22: Thurs.-Sat. 8:30 pm, Sun. 7:30 pm, \$16-18. 861-5079

Dreamlandia - Octavio Solis transports Calderon de la Barca's Life is Dream to the Tex-Mex border, where the issues of immigration, NAFTA, maquiladoras and narcotraffickers take center stage. The Thick House, 1695 18th Street, Thurs.-Sun. through September 15, 8 pm \$15-25. 401-8081

Rebel Without A Pause - New York comedienne Reno's one-woman show, a first-hand account of the September 11 tragedy, is back by popular demand. Brava Theater center 2789 24th Street, Sept. 3-8, Sept. 12-15, Sept. 24-29, 8 pm. \$24-28. Call 647-2822 or visit www.brava.org

The 38th Annual Book Sale by the Friends & Foundation of the SF Public Library - The largest book sale west of the Mississippi features everything from children's books to an array of rare and collectible items. Fort Mason Center from Thursday, September 5 through Sunday, September 8.

Qi Gong classes taught by Liping Zhu, student of Taoist Master Yu Anren and a gold medalist in the 1996 International Martial Arts Tournament. Quan Yin Healing Arts Center, 455 Valencia, Mondays and Thursdays at 6:30 pm, \$40/month/sliding scale. 861-4964

Astanga Yoga - Classes by Chalita Photikoe, who teaches the Astanga Primary Series integrating breath, bandhas and movement. Quan Yin Healing Arts Center, 455 Valencia, Mondays at 6:30 pm, \$40/month. 861-4964

Youths from 10-13 years of age can learn a variety of media, paper mache, sculpture, print-making, batik, puppet, mask, and jewelry-making skills at a workshop every Monday from 3:30-5:30 pm. Precita Eyes Mural Arts, 2981 24th Street, \$8 per session or \$50 for ten-class membership. 285-2287

Free meditation class. Psychic Horizons, 972 Valencia, Tuesdays at 7:30 pm. 643-8800.

Taichi: Taiyi Swimming Dragon Chuan Form is taught by Liping Zhu, student of Taoist Master Yu Anren and a gold medalist in the 1996 International Martial Arts Tournament. Quan Yin Healing Arts Center, 455 Valencia, Tuesdays at 6:30 pm, \$40/month/sliding scale. 861-4964

Figure painting for beginning and advanced artists wanting to learn to paint and draw the male and female form. One pose is worked on per class. Precita Eyes Mural Arts, 2981 24th Street, Wednesdays 7-9:30 pm, \$8 per session or \$50 for ten-class membership. 285-2287

Free queer swing dance: basic with intermediate drop-in lessons. Stud Bar, 399 Ninth Street, lessons Thursdays at 6:30, dance at 7:30. 252-9611

Learn to ballroom dance at beginning Ballroom Dance Lessons, followed by a Ballroom Dance Party. Dance contests

Mission Wall Dances/something there is that doesn't love a wall - Jo Kreiter and her acrial dance company, Flyaway Productions, perform a site-specific, Mission history-themed piece on a mural created especially for the performance. 1849 Harrison @ Alameda, September 14-22, 2 pm & 4 pm, free. 626-3311

In Exhale - Choreographer Randee Pauvre and Pauvre Dance present a concert of new and repertory dance pieces with 12 dancers. Dance Mission Theater, 3316 24th Street, Sept. 20-22, 8pm, \$16. 273-4633

2nd Annual Feast of One-Page Plays - Twenty very short plays, selected from over 200 entries are performed by the Abydos/The Directors Theatre. ODC Theater 3153 17th Street, Thurs.-Sun. September 26-October 6, 8pm, \$15-18. 863-934 www.odctheater.org

Ongoing classes and tours

Gallery walks - The newly opened Blue Room Gallery is offering free walking tours of Mission District galleries and studios for kids every Tuesday. Meet up at the Blue Room Gallery, 2331 Mission Street,

The SF SPCA offers several different dog obedience classes throughout the month. Call the Dog Training Division at 554-3509 for details or go to www.sfsPCA.org.

Ever wanted to visit Alcatraz at night? Here's your chance. Night tours of the Rock - with special nature and history programs geared to the interests of locals rather than tourists - are now a very happening thing. Revenues from ticket sales support restoration and preservation of the National Park. Tickets are \$20.75 and are available by calling 705-5555. For more information go to www.nps.gov/alcatraz

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held on the last Friday of every month. Metronome Ballroom, 1830 17th Street. Lessons are given Fridays at 7:30 pm, dance party 9 pm, \$15 for both, \$9 for the party only. 252-9000

Guided mural tour - See and hear all about 60 murals on a 10-block walk. Meet at the Café Venice on the 24th Street BART Plaza, Saturdays at 11 am, \$2-10. 285-2287.

Salsa classes with Ava Apple at the Metronome Ballroom, 1830 17th Street, every Saturday. Level 1: 3 pm, Level 2: 4:30 pm, 1-hour practice session between classes. Single class, \$14. 8 class card, \$96. 252-9000 or www.metronomeballroom.com

Another guided mural tour - See and hear all about 50 murals on an 8-block tour. Meet at Precita Eyes Arts and Visitors Center, 2981 24th Street every Sunday at 11 am, \$2-10. 285-2287

Kids' Mural Project - A workshop for kids 5-10 who want to paint a mural. Monday-Wednesday 3:30 to 5:30 pm, \$8 per class or \$50 membership, Precita Eyes Mural Center, 348 Precita. 285-2311

Yet another mural tour - Meet at Precita Eyes Mural Arts and Visitors Center 2981 24th Street at 1:30pm every Saturday and Sunday for a brief slide show and history presentation followed by a six-block 70 mural tour. \$12. 285-2287

Weekly

Mondays

Monday Night Marsh - Stand-up comedy and performance art by both the brightest lights and dimmest bulbs in the field. The Marsh, 1062 Valencia, 8 pm, \$7. 826-5750

Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition (MAC) holds public meetings on planning and development issues impacting the

Mission District. Centro Del Pueblo, 474 Valencia Street @ 16th St., 6-7:30 pm. Call Oscar or Geri at 431-4210

Tuesdays

Are you smarter than Cliff Claven? Try the Pub Quiz, hosted by Angie. Fun and prizes. Dylan's, 2301 Folsom @ 19th, 8:30. 641-1416

Women's Work - An ongoing bi-monthly series featuring live performances of dance, theater, music, spoken word and multimedia by women. Venue 9 252 9th Street, September 10, 17 & 24, 8pm, \$8-10. 289-2000 www.venue9.com

Wednesdays

Indulge your chess addiction with the all-levels Chess Club at 4 pm, or practice your Scrabble skills at Scrabble Nights at 7 pm, all ability levels welcome. Bernal Heights Branch Library, 500 Cortland Avenue, 7 pm, free. 695-5160

Practice your Spanish in an all-levels Spanish Conversation Group. Bernal Heights Branch Library, 500 Cortland Avenue, 7:30 pm, free. 695-5160

The International Socialist Organization holds weekly, open meetings at the SF Women's Building, 3543 18th Street, 7-9 pm. 336-5034

SF Bicycle Coalition Volunteer Night - 5-9 pm, in SFBC office,

1095 Market Street, Suite 208 (@ 7th). Every Wednesday, come to the weekly SFBC Volunteer night to do the things that make our office run, munch on pizza & snacks and enjoy the fine company of other cyclists. We can use your help! For more info contact Michael at 431-BIKEx1 or calfee@sfbike.org

Thursdays

Bring the really young folks (ages 1-36 months) for Preschool Storytime at 10:10 and a Bilingual Infant and Toddler Lapsit at 11:00 am, or treat kids ages 3-5 to. Mission Branch Library, 300 Bartlett Street, 10:30 am. 695-5090

Fridays

Gamesters, this is your night. Everything from Scrabble to Cribbage can be played with the regulars, irregulars and newbies at SF Games, in their new location at Mission Grounds Café, 3170 16th Street, 7 pm, free. 820-3200 Ext.105

Ballroom Dance Party! - Beginning ballroom lessons and dance party. Metronome Ballroom, 1830 17th Street, 7:30 pm -12 am, \$15 for lesson and party. 252-9000

"Sexotica" - Dj king Coffin spinning a funky fusion of Indian, Middle Eastern, and Latin grooves. The Makeout Room, 3325 22nd Street, 10 pm, free. 647-2888

Saturdays

Storytime en Español for the whole family. Afterwards, take part in a short craft activity. Mission Branch Library, 300 Bartlett Street, 12 noon, free. 695-5090

Found footage, experimental works of genius and the just plain wacky are all part and parcel of the short and feature-length films screened at the legendary Other Cinema. Artist Television Access, 992 Valencia, 8:30 pm, \$5. 824-3890

The Mock Café delivers comedy, comedy, comedy (some of it is even funny) at 9 pm. The dreaded open mic follows at 10 pm. The Marsh, 1062 Valencia, \$7. 826-5750

Swing City Dance Party - Beginning East Coast swing lessons & dance. Metronome Ballroom, 1830 17th Street, 7:30 pm -12 am, \$15 for lesson and party. 252-9000

Sundays

Live Flamenco Music and Dance - The flamenco group Arte and Compás performs live at Timos Restaurant, 842 Valencia, 7 & 8:30 pm. 647-0558 or www.timos.com

Dub Mission - Rotating resident dj's Sep, Vinnie, Ludichris, J. Boogie and Maneesh the Twister spin the night away. Elbo Room, 647 Valencia, 9 pm, \$5. 552-7788

Confortando A Los Sufridos Y Asustando A Los Confotables

Jorge Argueta

Es cierto

Todos nos vamos a morir
Lo malo de esto
es que no sabemos
cuándo, dónde, ni cómo

Es cierto

La vida es corta
y uno puede vivir
54 años, un día, tal vez 100
o tal vez más

Es cierto

A la muerte
no le importa
nuestro oficio
nuestra edad, o nuestro nombre

No le importa
si nos van a hechar de menos
o si se van alegrar
con nuestra ausenscia

Es cierto

A la muerte no le importa
si dejamos de envejecer
el día en que morimos
o si ya muertos nos volvemos viejitos

Hace apenas un mes
Victor Miller se murió
y de su vida sólo nos queda
el asombro de su muerte repentina

Es cierto

Las noticias en El Barrio
seguirán cargadas de rabia y alegria
y serán otros los que escriban de los desalojos
y de los indocumentados

Es cierto Victor Miller se fué de la Mission

pero que no lo dude nadie
a dónde quiera que este
ha de estar CONFORTANDO A LOS SUFRIDOS
Y ASUSTANDO A LOS CONFORTABLES



Comforting the Afflicted and Afflicting the Comfortable

by Jorge Argueta

We are all going to die
what is bad about this
is that we don't know
when, where or how

It's true

Life is short
one can live to be
54 years old, perhaps a 100
or maybe more

It's true

Death
does not care about
our profession
our age or our name

Death
does not care
if some people are going to miss us
or if some will be content with our absence

It's true

Death does not care
if we stop getting old
on the day we die
or if when dead we continue to grow old

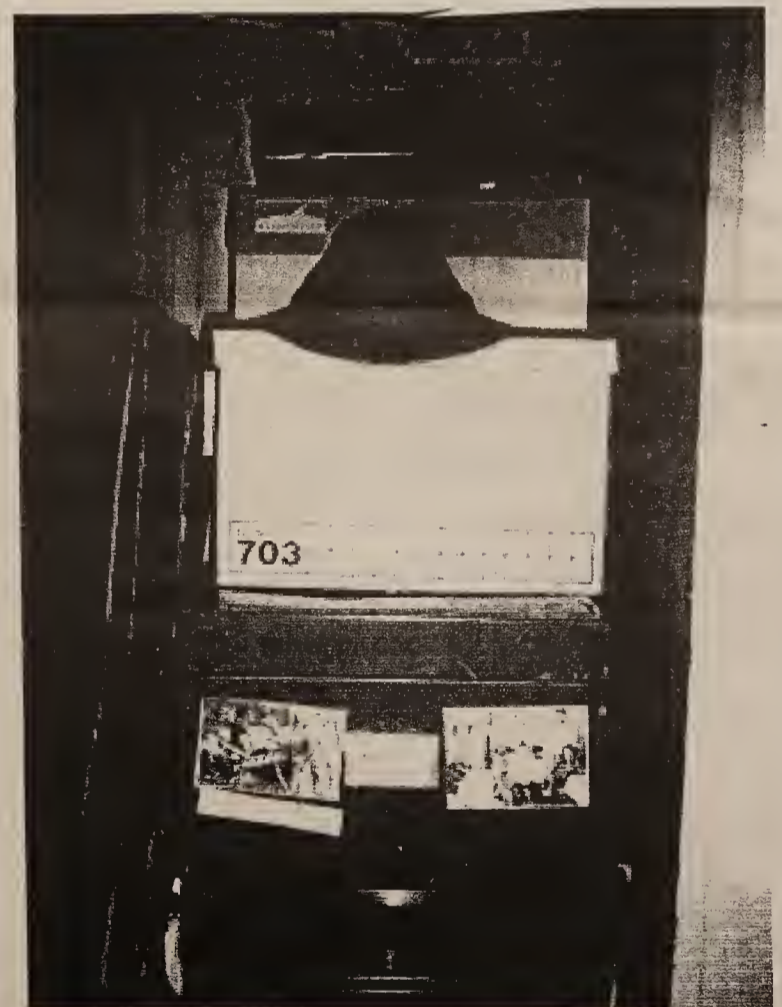
Just three weeks ago, Victor Miller died
and from his life all we have left
are memories of him
and the astonishing news of his sudden death

It's true

The news in the neighborhood
will continue to be full of happiness and sorrow
and others will write about the evicted
and the undocumented

It's true Victor Miller is gone from The Mission

but make no mistake
Wherever he may be now
for sure he is COMFORTING THE AFFLICTED
AND AFFLICTING THE COMFORTABLE



Cabbies' life can be hard to hack

During first week of August, Sukhpal Singh Sodhi, a Sikh Indian taxi driver, was shot and killed as he drove his cab from Folsom towards Mission Street in the early morning hours. His taxi rolled into a parked car, then collided with a utility pole and knocked out electric power for several blocks. A fire started, and it only became apparent when Sodhi was pulled out of his burning vehicle by emergency workers that he was the victim of a shooting. The unfortunate driver was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital. Sodhi drove for

United Cab for years, supporting his wife and daughters in the Indian state of Punjab with his American job. Sodhi's brother, a former San Francisco taxi driver, was murdered on September 15th, 2001 by a racist in Arizona who said he was acting "for America." After the tragedy, Sodhi continued to work in the United States despite his father's request that he return home to India because, the patriarch argued, the US was dangerous for people of Middle Eastern descent or appearance after 9/11.

His shooting will probably go down as an unsolved homicide.

As a taxi driver for three years, I've had some bad experiences.

I was working late on the morning of September 15th, 2001. Business had been consistently bad, so I was still driving after 2:00 a.m., when I normally turned my cab in. The period between two and four is the peak statistical time for robberies and crime in this city. I had been working myself hard and had little to show for it. San Franciscans were still partying, despite the collapse of the dot.com bubble and the World Trade Center, so taxi drivers could still rely on bar fares somewhat, but it wasn't like before. A pall had fallen over the City, as it had everywhere else in the country, and it was making itself felt economically. The evening of September 14th was the first time that week I took in close to \$100, and I counted myself lucky until I picked up my last fare at 23rd and Valencia.

I was stupid for picking the guy up, and normally I wouldn't have, but I was greedy, and greed is the foundation of a lot of stupidity. The guy looked like the Unabomber. He was wearing a sweatshirt with the hood pulled up. He had me drive up to Bernal Heights, and lit a cheroot cigar on the way there. When he had me stop, he knocked my glasses off with a side-swipe of his hand, and then he pulled an ice pick on me.

"Better give me all your money homes or

I'll stick ya," he said. I gave him everything I had.

"Better not be holding out on me, Homes, or I'll stick ya."

"I haven't got anything else." I said.

"Give me your license." I gave him my licens and he had me throw my keys onto the floorboard of the passenger side. "Now I know where you live, Homes. If you report this, I'll come and find ya." Then he ran outside and down the hill. He really knew what he was doing. By the time I found my keys, he was gone into the trees. This was good for him, because for about the first three minutes my mind was set on murder. I wanted to run the SOB over, and damn the consequences. Instead, I ended up staying up all night to file a police report at the Bayview Station. Yes, I could identify him in a line-up. Yes, I would press charges.

The sam guy held up about eleven more cabbies in the next several months before the SFPD caught him, when he stabbed a driver on Cesar Chavez. They shot him in the leg as he tried to get away.

There is a small physical attrition of taxi drivers in San Francisco. Two years ago, a driver in my company was shot in the head by a gang of youths who flagged him down near Pier 39. Amazingly, he survived, and came out of his coma after several days; but he refuses to drive a taxi any more.

Another driver, stabbed by a robber, is now blind.

There are times when taxi driving is an exciting job, providing rich fuel for a writer. A cabbie gets all sorts of voyeuristic snapshots of the lives of strangers. I've had women make out in my back seat, men make out in my back seat, leather men come on to me, and prostitutes flirt with me. I've chauffeured bankers, junkies, pimps, investment-broker hotshots, professional musicians, editors, teachers, welfare families, politicians, truck drivers on vacation, models, tourists, freaks, just about everybody. There are other times when it's actually boring, driving and driving and driving and never seeing anyone. There are times when I feel my personality has begun to atrophy from not having enough intellectual challenge, or connection with close friends, or from listening to too many confessions of people I know for ten minutes and never see again. At times like that, my life looks to me like the World Wide Web, filled with shallow glimpses of everything; and then I wish I could be a gardener instead. And, of course, there are times when it is simply dangerous and draining.

Driving a taxicab in San Francisco has its nomenents, but it's not much of a career, and wouldn't recommend it to just anyone.

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September 2002

Thursday, September 12th at 7:30 pm
Art/Women/California, 1950-2000 (UC Press) Reading and slide show! Diana Fuller, Laura Meyer, Sandra S. Phillips, and Terezita Romo

Thursday, September 19th at 7:00 pm
This is AECA! The Alliance of Emerging Creative Artists presents music by Leon Lee, Jeff Chan, and Neil Straghalis with readings by Aaron Shuman and other special guests in an evening of instrument-alone pieces and literary readings

Friday, September 20th and Friday, September 27th at 7:00 pm
Students of Diane DiPrima Poetry Reading

Saturday, September 21st at 7:30 pm
One Man's Trash (Arsenal Pulp Press)
Ivan Coyote (*Close to Spider Man, Boys Like Her*)

Tuesday, September 24th at 7:30 pm
University of California Press-Independent Press of the Month Readings by Patricia Albers (*Shadows, Fire, Snow*), Liza Dalby (*Geisha*), Alison Owings (*Hey Waitress*), Eric Stover (*A Village Destroyed: May 14, 1999*) and Reggie Zelnik (*The Free Speech Movement*)
All UC Press titles 30% off during September

Wednesday, September 25th at 7:30 pm
This War Called Love (City Lights)
Alejandro Murguía (*Southern Front*)

Thursday, September 26th at 7:30 pm
Critical Mass: Bicycling's Defiant Celebration (AK Press) Chris Carlsson (*Processed World, Shaping San Francisco*)

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Port of SF: Hyde St. Harbor @ Jefferson, 274-0565

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SEPTEMBER 11 COMMEMORATIVE CONCERT

Free Concert at Yerba Buena Gardens

Wed Sep 11 6pm

Yerba Buena Gardens (Mission between 3rd and 4th Streets)

Michael Tilson Thomas conductor

Joshua Bell violin

Rev. Cecil Williams narrator

San Francisco Symphony

On the one year anniversary of the September 11 tragedy, the San Francisco Symphony will perform a free concert in the tranquil outdoor setting of Yerba Buena Gardens in San Francisco. Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas will lead the Orchestra in a program of classic works by American composers, including Samuel Barber's Adagio for Strings and Aaron Copland's stirring *Fanfare for the Common Man*. Acclaimed Grammy-winning violinist Joshua Bell joins the San Francisco Symphony performing classic music by Leonard Bernstein — "New York, New York" from *On the Town* and "Make Our Garden Grow" from *Candide*. The program closes with Copland's majestic *Lincoln Portrait*, narrated by minister and community leader Cecil Williams.

Seating is very limited. Please bring a blanket or low beach chair. No pets allowed.

This concert is part of the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival.

Media Sponsor: CLASSICAL 102.1 KDFC



PHOTO: MCCARTHY

POEMS

edited by Jorge Argueta

LO QUE UN FUTURO PADRE LE DICE A SU FUTURO HIJO A LA HORA DE COMER

Ahora que la sangre de los no infectados se cotiza en bolsas de valores
¿cuál es el problema de que te alimentes con pastillas de colores?
aprovecha que aún hay tintes
¿o acaso extrañas la carne y las verduras?
esas son cosas que sólo conociste en fotos y documentales prohibidos,
por suerte no viviste ese tiempo sino tendrías mis pesadillas.

ANTES DEL NOTICIERO

El día no estuvo bien,
no tengo ganas de contarte lo que hice por favor no me digas lo que estás pensando
y abrázame,
sólo abrázame.



ESPEJO EN EL CIELO

Tarde o temprano
todo mundo se acerca a una ventana
mira las estrellas
y en ellas imagina lugares que nunca conocerá
lugares donde se salvan de sus problemas
lugares donde también hay ventanas
y gente
mirando hacia acá.

Adrián Arias, autor de varios libros de poesía, entre ellos: En los Cuadernos, segundo premio en los juegos florales "Javier Heraud", de la Universidad Católica de Perú, 1982. En 1984, su poemario Hábitos ganó primera mención en el certamen Julio Cortázar. En 1996, Sueños y Paranoias ganó el primer premio de la IV bienal de poesía Peruano Japonesa.

olas gigantes
espejos de fuego
y pasar la mano por tu espalda
cielo oscuro
2 millones de bombas al estilo Nagasaki
sentir escalofríos
toneladas de cuerpos
cielo oscuro
y besarte
108 objetos potencialmente peligrosos
32 kilómetros de roca
pero nunca me atreví
cielo oscuro
cráter
ya es demasiado tarde
bocas abiertas
cielo oscuro
te has mudado demasiado lejos
fin.

LLUVIA DE ESTRELLAS

Esperé la lluvia de estrellas
y aunque la noche estaba espesa
y el cielo cerrado
tus estrellas me llovieron
por todos lados.

SILENCIO

A veces las palabras son pájaros,
vuelan, vuelan, vuelan
entonces me quedo en silencio.

--
Hace un tiempo
no hacían falta las preguntas
hace algún tiempo
no hacían falta las respuestas
hace algún tiempo
nos amábamos.

--
Mi cama de arena,
mi cama de playa de sol
mi cama de infancia
mi cama donde no hay que despertar
tampoco hay que dormir
sólo estar
y sentir cómo dibuja la sangre
los caminos del cuerpo.

--
El tiempo
se sienta en una banca
para verse pasar
pero nada pasa.

ANAIS

El día en que tu naciste
no nacieron todas las flores
el día en que tu naciste
el cielo entro en mi pecho
y aparecio el universo

Susana Aragón trabaja en el campo de las artes visuales con Adrian Arias, desarrollan el género del video arte y video poesía. Estudio educación en la Universidad Católica de Lima.

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9. ATHENS BY NIGHT (GREEK) <i>Spinach, Feta Cheese, Black Olives, Pesto, Basil</i>	12.10	14.75	17.10
10. VALENCIA SPECIAL <i>Artichoke Hearts, Sun-Dried Tomatoes, Garlic, Black Olives, Zucchini</i>	11.85	13.85	15.85

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TOPPINGS

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Richard Pitt

Hormones again

In the last two months, there have been revelations in the media on the problems of long-term hormone therapy. A new study that tracked thousands of women for nearly twenty years revealed that women who took estrogen were, on average, 11 times more likely to develop ovarian cancer than those who did not. That risk increased dramatically the longer the women took the medicine. Women who took estrogen for 20 years or more were three times more likely to develop ovarian cancer than those who did not take the pills. Another study around the same time showed that the pills were doing more harm than good, even causing conditions the medicine was once believed to prevent, including heart disease.

Originally, these hormones were designed to give short-term relief from symptoms of menopause, such as hot flashes and night sweats. However, over time, long-term use of hormones was encouraged to prevent heart disease and osteoporosis. Today, an estimated 8 million women in the United States regularly take estrogen. However, these new studies only emphasize what many people have been saying for years. I have also previously written about hormone replacement therapy (HRT), questioning its efficacy in the treatment of osteoporosis and heart disease, and making the point that the trials supporting the therapy were far from conclusive.

What is most striking about this whole phenomenon is that the apparently "scientific" evidence that has justified the routine use of HRT for millions of women is highly questionable. Yet, for the last twenty years at least, doctors have routinely recommended this treatment for women, either not questioning

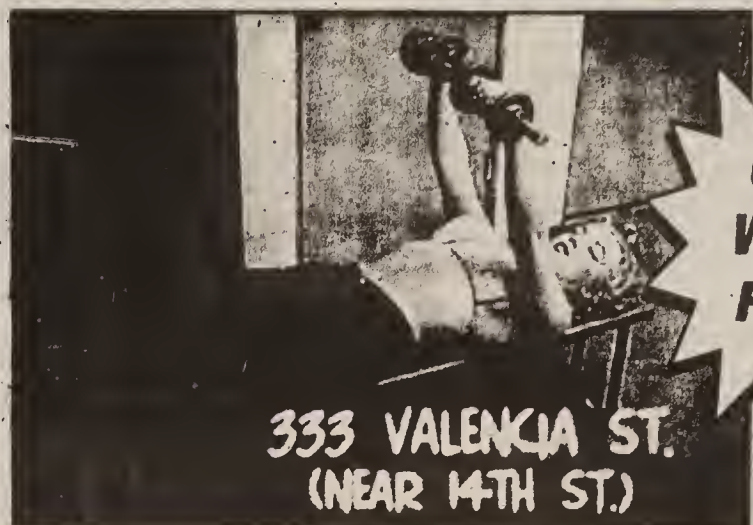
it or else not seeming to know of any conflicting evidence that may contraindicate it. In many cases, women have initially been given hormones for symptoms of menopause, and then have been routinely kept on them without any clinical justification.

It is a case where the relationship between pharmaceutical companies and the scientific community is more collusive than it should be, while physicians are used as distributors for their products. It is now a common observation that drug companies fund much of the supposedly "objective" research into new medicines and drugs, a fact that can taint the researchers' objectivity. It is also an example of the relentless medicalization of all aspects of life, a tendency to pathologize processes which are natural and do not need ongoing medical intervention.

Even as this "new" evidence hits the streets, there is now an attempt to make "male menopause" a disease and to prescribe hormones for it: in this case testosterone, the hormone essential for male functioning. An article by Jerome Groopman in the New Yorker magazine of July 29, 2002 is a fascinating exploration of this development. The article concerns a drug company that proposes to market testosterone to middle-aged men who show symptoms of general malaise or lack energy and libido. The assumption is that their testosterone level may be low and require a boost. However, there is no scientific data on what a normal level of testosterone is in middle-aged men, and there have been no long-term trials on the effects of testosterone "therapy." Research into testosterone levels shows no connection between "normal" function and hormone levels in the body.

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Some people just have higher or lower levels than others. The FDA only approved the use of testosterone for specific genetic problems requiring testosterone supplementation, but once the FDA gives a drug the green light, there is little to stop its being marketed for another condition that shows similar symptoms.

This looks like one more example of the drug companies' relentless pursuit of profit in marketing their product, as if they were selling us laundry

powder, with the unfortunate and possible tragic consequence of creating other health problems as a result.

We all have to be willing to take responsibility of our own health, to do our own research, and not to believe everything we hear and read. The "experts" don't always know.

Richard Pitt is a teacher, practitioner and health educator. He can be reached at www.homeopathy-academy.org or 415-695-8200.



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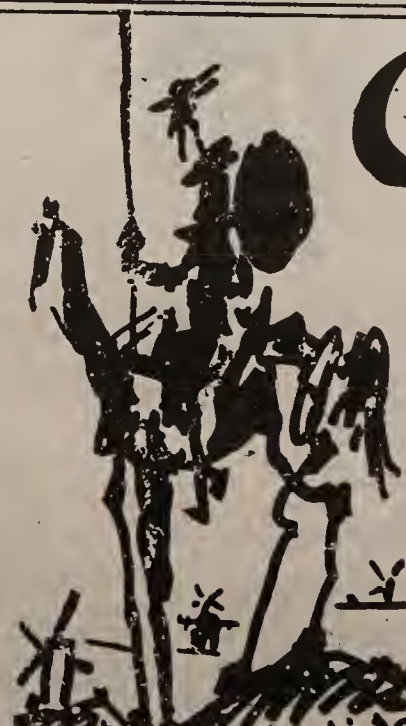


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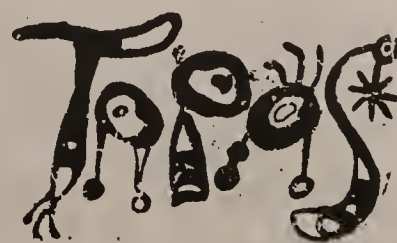
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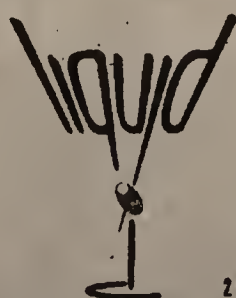
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Silicon Satan



How the Left can support the War on Terror

I was saddened to hear that the firefighters' unions have voted to boycott President Bush's 9/11 memorial ceremony--simply because they are peeved that he cut funding they had been counting on to pay for safety equipment and other boondoggles. The president needs to take a firm stand against these smoke-eating scumbags--for, apparently, all the sentimental nonsense that has been spouted about the bravery of their colleagues who died in the collapse of the twin towers has gone to their silly, behelmed little heads.

In fact, the heroism of the New York City firefighters is one 9/11 myth that is exploded as easily as the body of a Cantor Fitzgerald bond trader hitting the sidewalk. For when these fire-chasing fools ran into the burning towers, it is not as if they knew, or even suspected, that they were going to die: like everyone else, they had no idea that the buildings were in danger of falling, and doubtless anticipated nothing more than a few hours of wangling their hoses and gallantly helping gimps and old ladies hobble to the exits. That they were squished because they were unwittingly in the wrong place at the wrong time hardly makes them heroes--unless, of course, you consider dead possums on the highway heroes or, for that matter, bugs on your windshield.

It is to be hoped that impressionable progressives like yourselves will not be led astray by the bad example which these soot-coughing, pole-sliding proletarians have set for you with their selfish and unpatriotic decision to embarrass our president. Instead, you should aspire to show them up by proving yourselves to be loyal subjects of Mr. Bush and true heroes in the struggle against terror. However, since loyalty and heroism are probably unfamiliar concepts to people like you, allow me to make a few suggestions as to how the Left can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the president as he leads our nation forward in these difficult times:

1) Join the Green Party in its attempts to unseat Paul Wellstone--the most liberal (and electorally vulnerable) member of

the Senate--and thereby deliver that body to the Republicans. This way, you will help ensure that the president does not have to endure any checks on his power--after all, he has said that his job would be a lot easier if he were a dictator, and we do want to make the president's job as easy as possible, don't we?

2) Follow the example of the great Ralph Nader and invest in companies that are at the forefront of the War on Terror. If Mr. Nader can own shares in Halliburton, where Dick Cheney used to be CEO and which, coincidentally, just won the contract to build the prison camps where "enemy combatants" are to be detained, then so can you.

3) Finally--and this is addressed to those of you who, just a few short years ago, would demonstrate in the tens of thousands against something as trivial as the Italians holding their Columbus Day celebration--continue to resist the urge to pour out on the streets in protest against Messrs. Bush and Ashcroft's efforts to abolish the constitution: not only would this be disloyal and unpatriotic, but, if there were no "enemy combatants" to imprison, imagine how badly that would affect Halliburton's share price--and how hard it would be for Mr. Nader to lead the struggle against corporate domination of American politics if he were distracted by a steep decline in the value of his stock portfolio. And, as you sit around doing nothing while your Muslim neighbors are imprisoned in secret and without charge, pay absolutely no heed to those tired old words of Martin Niemoller: "First they came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up, because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up, because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up, because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak up for me." For clearly you have nothing to worry about: the authorities would never come for people who had proven themselves as heroically loyal as you have.

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Library Lady



Mission Branch

HISTORY OF SAN FRANCISCO AND THE MISSION

Interested in a little background about the wonderful city we live in -- or our beloved neighborhood, the Mission? Want to learn about the days of the Gold Rush -- or the great earthquake of 1906? Want some facts about the immigrants, Spanish-speakers, or eccentrics who live here? Come to the Library and see what we have to offer!

For starters, you might look at the books in our San Francisco history section, where you'll find such volumes as *Shanghai in San Francisco*, *Golden Gate Metropolis: Perspectives on Bay Area History*, or *San Francisco/Yerba Buena: From the Beginning to the Gold Rush 1769-1849*. Other interesting ones include *San Francisco Bizarro* and *The Earth Shook, The Sky Burned* (about the 1906 earthquake). The travel section is another good place to look. There's *Historic San Francisco: A Concise History and Guide*, *Streets of San Francisco: The Origins of Street and Place Names*, *San Francisco's Cable Cars*, *Stairway Walks in San Francisco* and so much more! You also might want to check out the videos in the KQED "Neighborhoods: Hidden Cities of San Francisco" series -- *The Mission* (Yayyyyyyyyyy!!), *Chinatown*, *The Fillmore*, and *The Castro*.

We have clippings, booklets, and other kinds of info on San Francisco and (especially) on the Mission neighborhood, including a fair bit of history in our Local Interest files - just ask! And we've been saving copies of some of our local publications, such as *New Mission News* (back to 1988), *El Mensajero* and *El Tecolote* (both back to 1994). We're missing a few issues -- still, it might be worth seeing if you can find that old photo from when you led the parade in Carnival!

There's statistics and other kinds of info on the SF immigrant population in reference books like *San Francisco Profile of Immigrants & Refugees* or *The Latstat Report - Poverty and Social Inequality in San Francisco: Focus on Latino Families and Children*. Much information from Census 2000 (though not all - these things take time!) is out now. Just ask and we'll help you find what's available.

For photos of what life in the Mission used to look like, come on in to the Mission Library and look at our "Shades of the Mission" photograph collection. "Shades of San Francisco" is a community history project run by the Library. Residents of different San Francisco neighborhoods are invited to bring in old photos of their families, workplaces and neighborhoods. The photos are then copied and made part of the Library's photo collection. So far, there are "Shades" collections of the Mission, Western Addition, and the Oceanview, Merced and Ingleside areas (although the Oceanview collection isn't quite ready for people to use). Anyway, "Shades of the Mission" is a fascinating photo collection that gives a vivid look at the Mission in days gone by!

There are other sources of historical photographs. Look on our website - click on electronic resources, then on San Francisco: community info, photos & schools at the top of the page. That will take you to the link for the San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection. There are hundreds of images from San Francisco's past available over your computer, or by using one of the computers to, consider visiting the Main Library's San Francisco History Center, where the entire collection, containing more than 250,000 photographs of San Francisco and California (ranging in date from 1850 to the present), is stored.

Actually, there are many reasons to visit the S.F. History Center - like if you want to find out the history of your house (or even of the land it's built on). Or you could do research on aspects of the City's history, such as its geography, politics, architecture, the lives of citizens, or the stories of the many ethnic, cultural and social groups that contribute to the City's vibrant character. The History Center is a public resource, accessible to all, but it's also an archive, so there are special rules for looking at some of their resources.

September: Mission Library's special programs for all ages:

Opera Piccola "Small Works" Theatre Company presents a fun story from Mexico - *Chac, the Rain Spirit: A Mayan Folk Tale* on Wednesday, September 18 at 4:00. Come early to volunteer to be part of the show!



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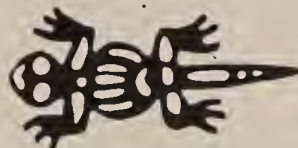
Bilingual (Spanish/English) Infant/Toddler Lapsit for children 0-36 months is held every Thursday at 11:00 am.

Family Storytime in Spanish is held every Saturday at 12:00 pm. A short craft activity follows.

See you at the Library!

-The Library Lady

You can send a question directly to Library Lady, c/o The New Mission News, 3288 21st Street, Box 202, San Francisco, CA 94110, or feel free to email her at Librarylady@sfpl.org



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LA POST-MODERN CURANDERA



by Resurrección Coyoltzin Cruz

Curanderismo is an ancient healing tradition which treats the spirit as well as the body, and which is practiced by healers of Latino ancestry. Curanderismo is performed as much in the far-flung areas of Mexico, where often there are no doctors, as in the inner city.

The true curandera is becoming somewhat less common in our communities as immigrants begin to assimilate and abandon our grandmothers' "superstitious" ways. In the face of western medicine, these traditions are seen as healing methods of the ignorant, and can become a source of embarrassment for those who have learned that the best means of survival in this society is fitting in. The way to do that is by becoming a modern North American citizen.

I call myself alternately an urban, post-modern, or neo-curandera. I am one of a small, but hopefully growing, number of American-born curanderas who want to recover and preserve this dying indigenous art, and who propose it as an alternative healing method. My grandmother was a curandera, and I have chosen to carry on the tradition in our family. I went to Mexico to study with curanderas on a special program through New College, and I have been involved in the study and practice of curanderismo for several years.

Over the course of my life I have been exposed to a wide variety of healing and magical practices (both of which make up curanderismo). As such, the healing I practice is a patchwork of the old and the new, the traditional and the New Age, the Western and the so-called New World. It is a hybrid, one that borrows from a wide range of spiritual and magical traditions. This, I believe, is the definition of curanderismo in the modern American age: post-modernist curanderismo, if you will.

I believe there are connections we can make to these rich healing traditions, which can close the gap between the unseen and the material. These are tools that can bring the spiritual, which so many of us long for and find missing, into our busy lives.

My method of dealing with cures and solutions is an unusual one: whereas the traditional curandera does hands-on healing, I make suggestions for remedies or rituals, which the petitioner can do to effect his or her own cures and solutions. Self-treatment is self-empowering.

Dear Ms. Cruz,
I have reflux, which is gastrointestinal juices going from my stomach back up into my esophagus. This causes a lot of pain and discomfort, and severely limits the foods I can eat. I'm already a vegan. My father died from a related cancer, so this is a serious concern for me. Do you have any suggestions for me? -Martha

Dear Martha,
I would recommend adding papaya, nopales, or aloe vera tea or juice to your diet when you are experiencing this kind of digestive problem. Papaya can be consumed fresh, as a juice, or even dried.

There is also papaya leaf tea. Nopales are the Nopal cactus paddles. Remove the thorns either by scraping or burning. To eat fresh, simply dice and add salt if you like. For a beverage, put a prepared piece of the cactus paddle (a piece about the size of an index card or smaller) into a blender with a cup of apple juice or water and blend on medium for one minute, or roast under an open flame or in a toaster oven, and eat plain or salted. The taste is somewhat like green beans. These remedies can also be used for regularity and constipation, so easy does it.

Please remember that the recommendations I make should never be used in place of the care of a western-trained doctor. In matters of medical importance, cover all bases to increase your chances for better health.

Bendeciones, Rez

Dear Rez:

I got a letter from a government agency saying [that], because I didn't show up for a court date, I'm being charged \$280 plus \$1,000 for abandoning a car I actually sold last August. They offered mail adjudication, and I responded well before the court date by mail, but they never got it or have lost it. Now I have to go in person and request a new court date so they will reopen the case. I'm afraid that the new court date will be during the time when I will be out of the country. I have some bad karma around this car, which I sold to a guy who never registered it. I have had to deal with his tickets for the last six months. This is threatening my economic well-being as well as my summer plans in a big way, plus I got all off-center. Do you have any advice as a curandera? -Suzanna

Dear Suz:

I realize it won't help you now to say that when you send legal letters by mail, you must send them by Certified Mail and keep copies of your correspondence to prove that you complied with the court's dictates. You might try going to City Hall and seeing if you can track down that letter yourself. But before you do anything, I would light candles either to Catherine of Alexandria (of the Wheel fame), who is the patron saint of lawyers, for her fabulous oratory skills, or to St. Nicholas of Myra (Santa Claus!) for unjust lawsuits. Ask for help in this endeavor, then turn it over.

As for the bad car-ma, burn a blue-gray candle to the universe, asking that the negative energy between you and this car be removed, or at least neutralized. Burning the candle will also help to restore your center.

Love, Rez

La Post-Modern Curandera is by Resurreccion Cruz, author of "Santora, The Good Daughter," Xipactli Publishing, available at Modern Times Books, Bernal Books, and Barnes & Noble.com. If you have spiritual or health questions that aren't being addressed by your religious and medical establishments, send Rez your questions at lacurandera@earthmonsterbooks.com.



Sonny Smith

Steppin' out

Home is the Hobo

I went down to El Mexicano bar on 24th, somewhere right around Treat Street, to meet a writer named Eddy Joe Cotton who wrote a book called HOB0, about riding trains like a hobo and, in fact, all about tramps, hobos, hopping freight trains, Mexico, father-searching, and folks named String Bean and Alabama; but he wasn't there, and I sat around El Mexicano for an hour, waiting while I drank Tecates with little limes and met a girl named Raina and got beat real bad at pool, and mostly explained to at least three or four people there why I, a gringo, would want to sit around in some Latino bar where I don't even know the language...

"Yo no se," I said; at least, I think I said, but I'm unclear. I was so disappointed that the writer didn't show up that I contacted him afterwards, ready to get mad, but he said he was at El Mexicano at 7 pm. "Impossible," I thought. "El Mexicano Bar on 24th, with the wooden bar and two pool tables?" he asked me, but in my El Mexicano there was only one pool table. The moral of the story is that there's two El Mexicanos on 24th, one near Treat and one farther east I haven't seen yet. So, while I was sitting in MY El Mexicano eating pork rinds off a paper plate and feeling kinda funny, being so white and all, probably the first white person to walk in there.

Your articles lead to gentrification!!" said one bartender I know. "Just 'cause I'm not stickin' to my side of the tracks?" I said. Really. While I was doing that, my writer was at his El Mexicano doing who knows what, perhaps ruminating on the Mission race game himself. "I'm dark enough I can pretty much pass. I don't get too hassled," he told me later. I guess he was just wondering why he was called for an interview at some bar and then the guy didn't show up and all...

I asked him some questions about trains when we finally got in touch. "Where do you catch the trains around here?"

"Oakland. And also east of Sacramento."

"Do you still hop the trains to get around?"

"Yeah, but writing this book slowed me down quite a bit. It took me off the trains. It took a long time to write and it took a long time to learn how to write."

"Do you know a lot of other people who catch trains?"

"A lot of people I hang out with have caught trains."

"Do you see more and more people doing it?"

"Not really."

"Do you think as times get harder, more people will do it?"

"I think it will take a lot more to get people out of their doors. Times aren't as bad as the Depression."

"Of course, things will never be the same, but if we were really to go into a full depression, as bad as it was in the thirties, I wonder if people would look to the trains again."

"I don't know. It was driven by necessity, but there was still romanticism too. A lot of people rode trains because it was romantic, and in the 'fifties and 'sixties it was done a lot out of romanticism. It was sort of a beat romance thing to drink wine down by the tracks and hang out with bums and hobos. But a lot of that spirit is gone for the youth."

"Are there many other books out there about train hopping, or sort of a portrait of the modern hobo?"

"I don't know of many in print, but I know there's a lot in the works, being worked on. I know a few writers who are writing about it. A lot of the hobos I know are writing. Part of the hobo tramp story is this kind of rambling gospel storytelling, so there are a lot of stories out there. Every so often the subculture kind of rises to the surface, and you might read some articles, or an indie documentary will be made, and then it goes out of sight again. But it will probably always be here for people sort of searching for a kind of Americana that they might be missing. Maybe the reflective times that America is going through right now, re-evaluating

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itself, maybe it's causing people to search out American roots and history, so that's why you're hearing about it right now."

"Are there many girls out there, riding the trains?"

"There's some. Not too many, of course, but a few."

"I wanna ride a train."

"Is that something you've always wanted to do?"

"Not really, I guess, but I've heard about it over the years. But it sounds dangerous."

"Yeah, it can be if you don't know what you're doing. You have to take your time and catch the right ones."

"It seems like it must be a lot harder these days, that security must be a lot tougher than it used to be around trains."

"That's where nightfall can help you out quite a bit."

"You have a band, too, right?"

"It's more like a variety show. Sort of a sideshow-type thing, fire breathers and a jug band and other stuff. I took them along on my book tour."

"Are you guys playing anywhere in September?"

"We just got off the road, so, no, but we have one thing at Ruby Skye (downtown) in October."

"What is that place?"

"It's kind of a disco-house-dj-thing place, so I don't know what it will be like, but we knew someone who works there, so that's how we got it..."

Then the interview was over, and I tried to think what the two El Mexicanos in the Mission might have to do with hopping freight trains, and I figured nothing, really, except cheap beer and not too many women, but then I also thought modern 'legal' Americans no longer really migrate anymore, unless you call suburban sprawl a migration. There's not much movement across the land in the hopes of finding a better job or a better life, but amongst the Latino population, like the folks at the El Mexicanos, especially in California, the migration is fully alive: 'illegal' aliens come up from Mexico and farther south looking for work, and 'illegal' or legal Latino Americans follow sandia and tomatoes and whatever crops are in season across the land. The myth of moving onwards for something better is lived in America by hobos, tramps and migratory workers.

Sonny Smith

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